DAU – The Way Ahead

Achieving Acquisition and Training Excellence

FRANK J. ANDERSON JR.

As I write this article, dramatic economic and political changes have forced America and DoD to rethink the way we do business. Corporate America has downsized, restructured, reengineered, and reorganized in an effort to reduce costs and improve efficiency. Most companies have shed all but what they consider their core competencies in an effort to meet their customers' needs with improved efficiency and competitiveness.

Meeting the Challenges of a Dynamic Workplace Environment

The environment in the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) has been the same. We have a new president and a new DoD leadership team. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has initiated an ongoing strategic review of the DoD as he and the new leadership team address major issues of how to best streamline and organize the DoD; budget and fund priority initiatives; manage the acquisition process; and improve DoD's ability to attract, train, and retain a quality workforce—all multifaceted and dynamic issues. Change is hard, but it also provides new opportunities for us to grow and continue to excel. To be successful will require all of us to respond in a positive, proactive, and energetic way.

Achieving Acquisition Excellence

Numerous acquisition reform initiatives have been directed at improving the efficiency of our acquisition and logistics

Anderson is President, Defense Acquisition University, Fort Belvoir, Va.

Frank J. Anderson Jr.
President, Defense Acquisition University

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operations. While new initiatives resulting from acquisition reform have produced significant savings, additional savings are achievable through the consistent application of best business

practices to achieve acquisition excellence. Pete Aldridge, our new Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD[AT&L]) has indicated he will focus on the theme of "moving from acquisition reform to achieving acquisition excellence."
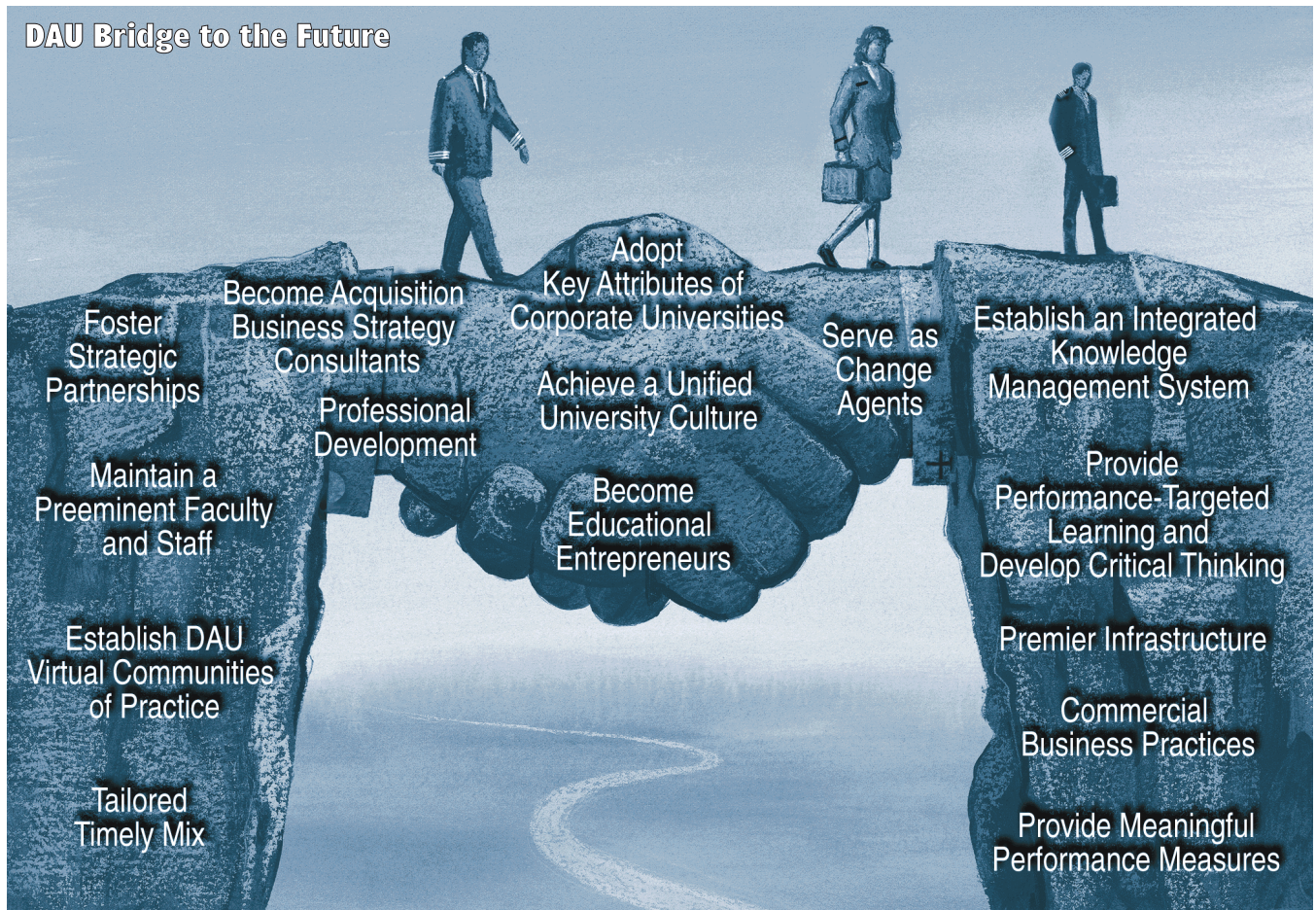
DoD's ability to move from an environment of acquisition reform initiatives to an environment of sustained acquisition excellence will depend on a cultural and organizational transformation based on best-in-class business practices. A few examples of this include an increased emphasis on e-Business concepts and processes; changing the environment to achieve streamlined decision making; and renewed emphasis to attain program stability. These are not necessarily new concepts, but what does appear to be different is the commitment to execution and smart implementation. DAU has a critical role to play in this transformation process. This does not mean that government can or should operate exactly like a private corporation, but we should adopt key attributes that instill in the acquisition workforce the same cultural values that have made the U.S. economy a world leader.

Re-Thinking and Re-Tooling the Defense Acquisition University

Our internal surveys tell us that the performance characteristics valued most by the acquisition, technology and logistics workforce (AT&LWF) are, and will continue to be, attributes such as speed, agility, adaptability, customer focus, and timely, current, targeted training—we are aggressively working to instill these elements in all of our training products and services, and our internal processes. I will share with you the "Team DAU"

Foster Strategic Partnerships

Become Acquisition Business Strategy Consultants

Adopt Key Attributes of Corporate Universities

Serve as Change Agents

Establish an Integrated Knowledge Management System

Professional Development

Achieve a Unified University Culture

Provide Performance-Targeted Learning and Develop Critical Thinking

Maintain a Preeminent Faculty and Staff

Become Educational Entrepreneurs

Establish DAU Virtual Communities of Practice

Premier Infrastructure

Commercial Business Practices

Tailored Timely Mix

Provide Meaningful Performance Measures

initiatives we are currently working as we re-think and re-tool defense acquisition training to achieve acquisition and training excellence for the defense and federal acquisition community. Although we have many initiatives we call "Fast Track Initiatives," our over-arching focus is really in five areas: 1) developing a strategy-driven and customer-focused training concept; 2) moving beyond certification training to a performance support environment; 3) expanding e-Learning to support and facilitate e-Business; 4) establishing a case-based training environment; and 5) cultivating strategic alliances and partnerships to expand the training envelope.

Strategy-Driven Training Concept

The defense acquisition training community is currently faced with some major challenges that do not allow us to cling to the status quo.

- First, acquisition training must reach more people. The redefinition of the acquisition community increased the number of individuals requiring training from approximately 100,000 to 146,000 — an increase of 46 percent.
- Second, knowledge management and knowledge dissemination must become an integral part of the new strategy-driven training concept. This will allow us to address the aging workforce issue and help prepare us to train new employees who will be entering the acquisition community. But, this is more than just a traditional training issue for new employees. We must learn how and act now to capture and maintain (mining) the intellectual capital we do not want to lose with the departing employees.
- Third, we must use technology to expand the reach of training, and to allow the individual and workplace supervisor more control over training.
- Fourth, changes in training should address deficiencies, and improve the overall quality of the learning experience for each individual.
- Fifth, our training strategy must build on the current foundation and include a robust continuous learning program as an integral part of our initial strategic planning, and not be addressed as an afterthought.

Although the five factors just listed indicate growing demands for acquisition training, the budget is relatively flat. Consequently, our focus has been on optimizing available resources, while balancing and integrating the following growth challenges: 1) reduce the cost of training; 2) reduce the time for training; 3) expand the reach of training; and 4) improve the quality of training. We have engaged and teamed with the Service Acquisition Executives, the Directors of Acquisition Career Management, and the career field Functional Advisers to establish a strategy-driven and resource- constrained training concept. We have also briefed several acquisition field commanders to obtain feedback and to build consensus on direction. Initial results indicate we are on track, but the journey is not complete.

"FAST TRACK
PREPARING FO

Strategic Alliances. Representatives of DAU and the U.S. Navy sign a Memorandum of Understanding to kick off the Joint Service Program Management Community of Practice initiative, Feb. 7, 2001. From left: Eileen Roberson, Navy Acquisition Reform Executive; Ivan Hall, Deputy, Knowledge Management; Frank Anderson Jr., President, DAU; and John Hickok, DAU Knowledge Management Officer.

Faculty Development and Currency. The DAU Beyond 2000 Conference, held Nov. 14–16, 2000, at the University of Maryland Conference Center, was held to focus the DAU faculty and staff on the evolving capabilities of technology and the importance of achieving excellence in today's changing environment. Dr. Jerome Smith, DoD Chancellor for Education and Professional Development, was a featured speaker.
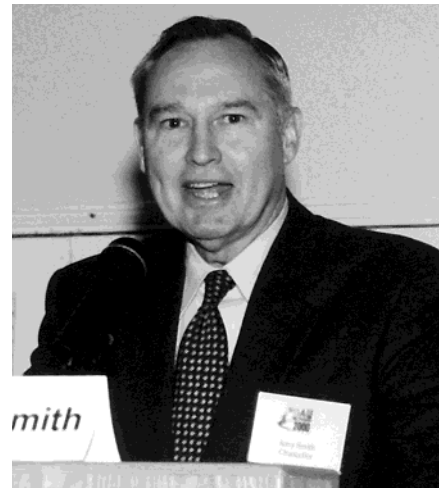
Change Management Center. Participants in a breakout session at DoD's December 2000 Change Management Summit discuss ways to streamline contracting procedures using the tools provided by the Change Management Center.

Photos by Richard Mattox

DAU HQ/DSMC Relocation. In September 2000, the Defense Acquisition University completed its relocation of headquarters personnel from Alexandria, Va., to Fort Belvoir, Va. Pictured is Bldg 202, the new location for DAU Headquarters at Fort Belvoir, Va.
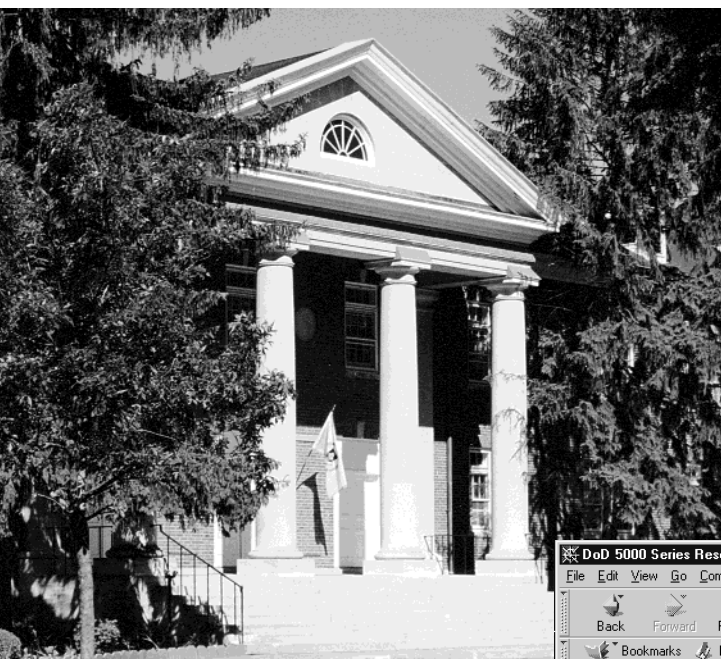
Knowledge Management. DAU's Virtual Campus is a recent knowledge management system developed by the University. Besides hosting learning products, the site provides student access to all the functions typically managed in a campus administration building by registrars, training officers, career managers, and university administrators. Eventually, the University's knowledge management system(s) will capture selected acquisition workforce/faculty/staff/learning partner capabilities, host learning products, support virtual communities of practice, and support organizational operations.
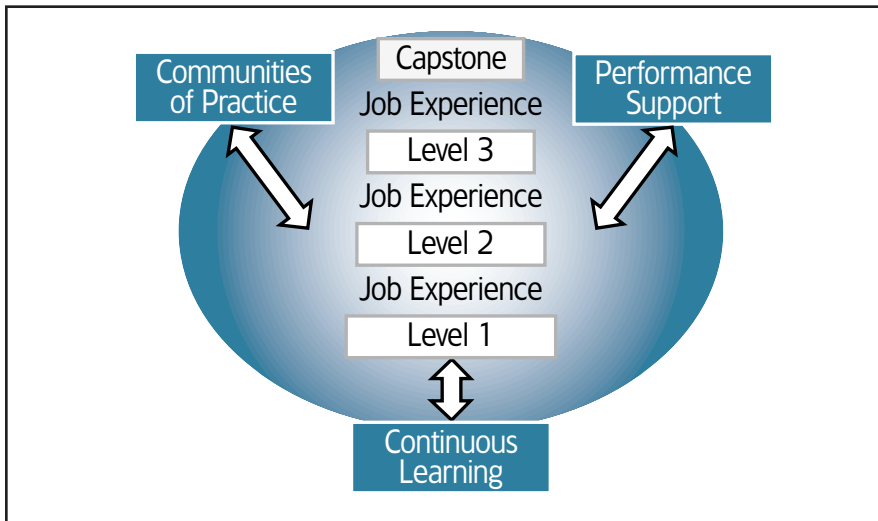
Supporting the New DoD 5000 Series Changes. In March 2001, DAU went online with its new DoD 5000 Series Resource Center.
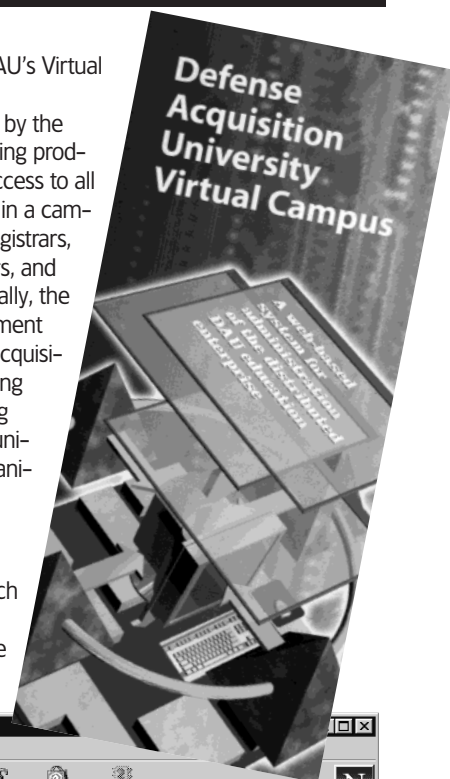
Revision of PM Training Curriculum. Development of the Program Management Tools Course, PMT 250 (a nonresident course available through the Internet) was put on DAU's "fast track, with contract award taking less than three months. In laying the groundwork for PMT 250, the DAU-DSMC PMT 250 team visited the Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department, NAS Patuxent River, Md. From left: Larry Louden, Technical Representative, AAI/ESI; Wayne Glass, BRTRC, PMT 250 Course Designer; Steve Israel, PMT 250 Project Officer; Frank Ferney, Director, Pioneer CFA, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division; and Bill Bahnmaier, PMT 250 Program Manager.

DAU Learning Construct
Modernizing Acquisition Training — Performance Learning Model (PLM)

Communities of Practice · Capstone · Performance Support

Job Experience · Level 3 · Job Experience · Level 2 · Job Experience · Level 1

Continuous Learning

Moving Beyond Certification Training to a Performance Support Environment

Since its inception in 1991, DAU's primary goal has been to provide the defense acquisition workforce with the highest quality training and education to satisfy the certification requirements defined in the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) and its related DoD directives. This will continue to be a primary and critical mission area for the University. Acquisition training is a critical element not only in meeting DAWIA certification requirements, but also in preparing the AT&LWF to think differently, develop better business practices, and shape smart business deals.

We recognize, however, that DAWIA certification is not an end unto itself. For that reason, we are working with our customers to better focus our products and services to accommodate the total needs of the workforce, not just certification training. In moving toward this goal, we have established a new learning model (shown in the chart above) we call the Performance Learning Model (PLM).

In the past, we have focused primarily on classroom instruction for DAWIA training requirements. As the PLM suggests, we are building a new learning environment that will give each of you more control over your learning needs, and

will take full advantage of new opportunities created by the information technology revolution. We are developing new learning products and services based on a robust continuous learning program, and functional communities of practice that will link experts and practitioner's together in virtual communities, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

In addition, we are building new tools for knowledge dissemination and performance support that take place outside of the classroom environment. Most of these elements exist today in a limited and ad hoc fashion. The PLM creates a structured and conceptual foundation for the new learning environment.

To become more responsive to the acquisition community's total mission-related needs, DAU faculty are helping program offices and other acquisition organizations with specific, real-world issues. Consulting and performance support is viewed as a vital part of our mission, and we are positioning ourselves to be a significant partner for future acquisition support and assistance. We are listening and responding to customers' requests with the appropriate combination of assets from within DAU. We are also brokering assistance from other sources in DoD, the Federal Government, and both public and private sector training and educational entities.

e-Learning to Expand Reach, and Support/Facilitate e-Business

As previously discussed, Under Secretary Aldridge, USD(AT&L), has indicated he will place increased emphasis on e-Business practices. DAU can and will facilitate this transition through our e-Learning initiatives. We will train the way we work, and expose all employees to e-Tools in the learning process. Our e-Learning strategy involves both internal and external initiatives. Internally, we will leverage technology and electronically link faculty and staff across all locations. Cross-campus collaboration will powerfully improve our ability to add speed, agility, and quality into all of our products and services.

Our external e-Learning initiatives are expanding the reach of our training products, driving down the cost of training, and improving the overall quality of learning experience. Our e-Learning philosophy goes beyond training to include the delivery of information and tools that improve performance and build virtual communities of practice. We have had great success in converting traditional instructor-led classroom courses to computer- or Web-based offerings. The results are a more responsive and agile organization and course delivery system.

We are using a variety of distributed learning approaches. For example, ACQ-101, BCF-102, and TST-101 are strictly online-delivered courses. PMT-252 is an online course that also uses synchronous cohort groups. ACQ-201 and BCF-211 are hybrid courses with a mix of online and instructor-led sessions. In addition, e-Learning expands our reach as reflected by the ACQ-101 course where we increased the annual throughput from 3,000 to over 10,000 graduates. This represented a 300 percent expansion of our annual student reach. The feedback from our e-Learning graduates has been extremely favorable and positive.

We are still in a growth mode in our e-Learning journey, and we recognize that some of our customers have some very real concerns about the rapid move to online training. And, we are moving

quickly. In 1998, only 2 percent of DAU graduates attended online training courses. By the end of 2002, when we complete the re-engineering of the Program Management functional training, that number will be approximately 40 percent. If you include the hybrid courses, the number rises to approximately 60 percent. We are now actively engaged in working with the contracting functional community— our largest training area. The outcome of these discussions will also expand the reach of e-Learning training.

The bottom line is that we are committed to transforming acquisition training to best serve you. In the past, we have served your learning needs, primarily, through resident courses. In the future, we will provide more online training that you will be able to access from your work/home location. We are not totally moving away from traditional classroom training, but we are working with each functional community to establish the right balance between resident and online training.

Establishing a Case-Based Learning Environment

We want members of the acquisition workforce to leave our courses with a suite of high-order thinking skills that result from an environment rich in opportunities for critical thinking and analysis. To that end, we are working with all functional areas to create appropriate case-based training concepts for all Level III certification training. Presently, our major initiative in this area is focused on the program management re-engineering effort. We are completely re-structuring the Advanced Program Management Course using a modified Harvard case study approach in the design and development of the course. The case-based training method is a time-tested learning approach used in virtually every "world-class" executive development program, including institutions such as Harvard, Darden, Wharton, and MIT.

We have established a dedicated team, and we are working with field program offices, Program Executive Officers, and other major stakeholders to obtain real-life challenges, problems, and dilemmas to use in building our case studies. These cases represent the kind of real-life situations our students can expect to face in their work environments. This is the most comprehensive re-engineering of this program since it was first established in 1971. We also recognize that we must train our faculty to function differently in a case-based environment, and we are working that area very hard. We are really excited about how this program is evolving.

Strategic Alliances and Partnerships to Expand the Training Envelope

Our strategic alliance initiative provides a unique opportunity for us to team with external organizations to expand the acquisition training envelope. These partnerships immediately expand our continuous learning opportunities and provide more choices for the acquisition community. We are actively fostering mutually beneficial arrangements to engage and facilitate synergy with private providers of acquisition training. The criteria for qualified academic partners, determined on a non-exclusive basis, is the ability to provide value-added contributions to the DAU training mission.

One example is our partnership with ESI International and George Washington University School of Business and Public Management (GWU). This is one of the first of its kind in the Department of Defense. They now offer DAU graduates credit toward a joint master's certificate in four Functional Areas: Project Management, Contracting, Information Technology, and Commercial Contracting.

Another example is our partnership with Frontier Technology, Inc. (FTI), which teaches an elective for the Advanced Program Management Course (APMC) on cost estimating. This partnership brings state-of-the-art software tools into the classroom with little or no development required by DAU. We are also developing partnerships with other institutions, including the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT), George Mason University (GMU) and Mary Washington College (MWC).

The primary benefit of these alliances is the ability to build new synergy and leverage existing capabilities throughout the United States, especially in areas where we have large concentrations of the acquisition workforce, with little or no capital investment. This greatly increases the value of past and existing DAU training (greater Return on Investment).

DAU — Your Learning Partner

There is significant energy and positive, proactive work ongoing within DAU. Our goal is to be the acquisition community's learning resource of choice, and we are really excited about being your learning partner. We are committed to transforming DoD's acquisition training to best serve you. In the future, we will provide more online- or Web-based training that you will be able to manage at your work location. At the same time, we are working with each functional community to establish the right balance between resident and online training. We are building a learning environment that will take full advantage of new opportunities that have been created by the information technology revolution.

We believe DAU has a major role to play as we work to achieve acquisition excellence. We will increasingly serve as change agents in addition to our traditional role of providing DAWIA instruction. We are exploring innovative practices and serving on acquisition process improvement teams. As new practices are approved, we are developing strategies to effectively reduce the cycle time required to provide information and training to the workforce. We are working toward rapidly deploying learning products using knowledge management techniques, and conducting targeted team training to facilitate the ability of the acquisition workforce to quickly deploy new business practices. We are really excited about the future, and the new challenges and opportunities we will face together.

DAU Signs Letters of Intent for Three Additional Strategic Alliances

On April 30 DAU signed Letters of Intent (LOI) with Florida Institute of Technology (FIT), George Mason University (GMU) and Mary Washington College (MWC). Under the DAU-FIT partnership, DAU students will be able to leverage completed DAU training and take courses for Graduate Certificate and Master's of Science Degree Programs, including but not limited to: Acquisition, Acquisition and Contract Management, Logistics Management, and Material Acquisition Management. Under the DAU-GMU School of Public Policy partnership, students will be able to leverage completed DAU training toward an M.S. in Transportation Policy, Operations, and Logistics. Under the DAU-MWC strategic partnership, DAU students will leverage completed DAU training toward MWC courses to receive graduate Certificates and/or Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degrees for graduate and professional studies.

DAU is working with colleges and universities such as Northern Virginia Community College, Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland, and others to expand the opportunities for continuous learning activities for the Defense acquisition workforce.

Pictured from left: Kenneth E. Cox, Research Associate, GMU; Paul McMahon, Director of Strategic Partnerships, DAU; Dr. Lee S. Dewald Sr., Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, FIT; Dr. Ronald L. Marshall, Associate Vice President, Extended Campus, FIT; Jonathan L. Gifford, Director, Professional Studies in Transportation Policy, Operation, and Logistics, GMU; Lloyd H. Muller, Director National Capital Region, FIT; Frank J. Anderson Jr., President DAU; Donna Richbourg, Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform); Dr. Blair Staley, Assistant Professor of Leadership and Management, Mary Washington College James Monroe Center (MWC JMC); Kingsley E. Haynes, Dean, The School of Public Policy, GMU; Larry Heller, Chair, Logistics Management Support Department, DAU-DSMC; and Dr. Alan G. Heffner, Program Director, MWC JMC.